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ABSTRACT

Policies for educational institutions reflect social values. However, modern Canadian society is pluralistic; many values are held, and often these are in conflict with one another. Neither an appeal to the facts nor reasoned argument will reconcile such conflicts. Policy makers must think globally and act locally to ensure that all levels of society and all age groups are encouraged to participate in the processes of learning and information sharing. Common failings of locally developed policies are: (1) the use of vague or even incoherent language; (2) reliance on faulty assumptions; (3) failure to review and revise policies regularly; (4) policies that provide no guidance to administrators; and (5) failure to monitor policy implementation. By being sure of the facts, honest about assumptions, and clear in language, trustees can make significant progress in policy development. However, they must also take care to ensure that administrators are implementing policies appropriately. The Saskatchewan Association for Lifelong Learning statement on global learning is appended. (VVC)

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POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Christian Stuhr

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POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Executive Summary

Policies for educational institutions reflect social values. However, modern Canadian society is pluralistic; many values are held, and often these are in conflict with each other. Neither an appeal to the facts nor reasoned argument is likely to reconcile such conflicts. Any attempt to resolve the inevitable differences by rising to a global perspective is doomed to fail. Trustees wanting to do a good job for their institutions are best advised to concentrate their efforts locally.

Common failings of locally-developed policies are:

- the use of vague or even incoherent language;
- reliance of faulty assumptions (which sometimes result in developing policy solutions to non-existing problems);
- a failure to review and revise policies regularly;
- policies that provide no guidance to administrators, and
- a failure to monitor policy implementation.

By being sure of their facts, honest about their assumptions, clear in their language and relevant to their institutions, trustees can make significant progress in policy development. However, they must also take care to assure that administrators are implementing policies appropriately.

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1. INTRODUCTION: On thinking about values, rules and the real world. The purpose of policies, in adult education and training as in any other area, is to regulate the behavior of both individuals and institutions, so that similar situations are dealt with in similar ways. As long as I live the life of an anchorite, I am subject only to those rules that I choose to impose upon myself. If I should act inconsistently from one moment to the next - so be it. If I should contradict myself - very well, I contradict myself. If I don't mind, no one else will, either. Once I bind myself to the society of others, however, I am the subject of considerable pressure to conform to rules. These are determined, at least in part, by persons other than myself. The substance of our rules varies from time to time and from place to place; the fact that rules exist is a universal constant among human beings living in groups.

Rules govern both individual and institutional behavior. They put into words the values we hold, and distinguish that which is acceptable from that which is not. Given the complexity of human relationships, it is inevitable that in any society, individual rules grow to form a system. Within any such system, it is a characteristic that consistency is preserved. Consider the alternative: imagine a

system of rules which would simultaneously and in the same sense both require and forbid a given activity 'x'. It would be futile to rely on such a system as a guide for action. Or, to make the same point somewhat differently, anything would be permitted - since, logically, anything follows from a contradiction. Internal consistency is a sine qua non. For this reason, all societies seek to remove logical contradictions from the rules to which they subscribe. When apparent inconsistencies do emerge, something has to give. Human beings may be wise or foolish, depending on how they are viewed, but in the long run, their wisdom or folly is nothing if it is not internally consistent.

A footnote on the anarchist option: Because anarchists are so radical in their rejection of conventional values, it may be thought that they would come the closest to rejecting the requirement for logical consistency. A brief examination of anarchist systems shows that such is not the case. Proudhon, best known perhaps for his equation of private property with theft, also advocated voluntary associations for mutual aid, that is, associations that consistently operate under the principles of mutualism. Bakunin, remembered for describing the urge to destroy as "creative", also

declared that what is real, is rational. A contemporary exponent of anarchism, Robert Wolff, denies the legitimacy of state control over its citizens - but only because he deems those citizens to be capable of independent and consistent moral reasoning. Whatever may be said about anarchism as an alternative to coercive social control, it is simply not the case that anarchist systems dispense with the requirement for logical consistency. Even Abbie Hoffman, who uses apparent contradiction as a kind of mental jujitsu, says of his book, Revolution for the Hell of It: "Make no mistake about it: it was written with the hope of destroying America". Everything in that book is consistent with this principle, from his introductory call to disavow "all values held by our parents who inhabit and sustain the decaying institutions of a dying Pig Empire", to his laudatory review of a book entitled Fuck the System in his concluding chapter.

To say that systems of rules tend toward internal consistency is one thing. It is not at all the same thing as asserting that rules usually do, or at least should, correspond to anything that we may find in the observable world. Indeed, a moment of reflection will suffice to show that there is an unbridgeable chasm between ideal values and rules

of behavior on the one hand, and what we actually observe happening in reality on the other. With some effort, rational people may reach agreement in objectively describing such phenomena as divorce, abortion, capital punishment, homosexuality or free trade with the United States. However, even after agreement is reached about exactly what the facts are, which is difficult but not impossible, disagreements will persist as to whether these things are desirable or undesirable, permissible or impermissible. A person who believes that homosexuality is a crime against nature and thus is opposed to homosexual behavior on moral grounds is unlikely to change these views after reading, in the April, 1988 issue of the Scientific American, of the discovery by Bernd Wursig that such behavior occurs frequently in several species of whales. Instead, the argument is likely to be re-cast in slightly different terms: the behavior of animals is not necessarily a guide for humans, and in any case, homosexuality is contrary to our "higher" nature. The fact that homosexuals find their acts pleasurable is irrelevant. It is perfectly consistent to admit that they find a given activity pleasurable while at the same time condemning it as wicked, sordid and depraved. There truly is no arguing about tastes.

We can observe the way the world is, but such observations do not force us to admit anything about the way people should behave. How, then, do people deal with differences in value judgments? Typically, they may ignore them; they may attempt to force compliance with their own preferred values, or they may attempt to persuade by rational argument. It is the last of these that is of special interest here.

Facts alone, it has been shown, are not sufficient to compel a conclusion about our values. However, if it can be shown that certain factual matters have consequences to which the parties of the discussion attach moral values, then progress toward a generally accepted conclusion is possible. For instance, it may be demonstrably true that many persons adopting a homosexual lifestyle either do not form conventional families consisting of one husband, one wife, and one or more children, or that they frequently break away from such family units after taking up homosexual behavior. If such a pattern should be demonstrated as a matter of fact, then it could plausibly be suggested that homosexual behavior causes a decline in the strength of the conventional family. This suggestion may persuade some to evaluate homosexuality

negatively, but only if they value the benefits of conventional family life above the pleasures that homosexuality holds for them. I have observed that most practicing homosexuals do not, in fact, treasure conventional family life so highly. For this reason, I am not surprised that the suggestion, "Homosexuality undermines the family", has little effect on them. I have also observed that arguments between critics and proponents of homosexuality typically generate strong emotions but fail to result in agreement on the issues in question.

Why this digression concerning homosexuality? It is because the differences between gay and straight values and lifestyles have some similarity to the differences that exist between cultures, between religions, between historical epochs. The values of Anglo-Canadians are significantly different from the values of Franco-Canadians. The values of Irish Catholics are significantly different from the values of Irish Protestants. The values of Canadians living in 1988 are significantly different from the values of Canadians living in 1914. In each case, the value systems are generally internally consistent - and more or less mutually irrefutable.

Policy-makers would do well to remember that not all differences of opinion are capable of being resolved rationally.

2. On thinking globally. An early (1980) edition of Saskatchewan's Community College Trustee Manual contains the following remarks on trusteeship:

> "The board functions under the Act and the Regulations as a trustee for the effective management of the college. In public institutions, such as community colleges, this role is associated with the concept of board accountability. In effect, the board functions to ensure that public monies appropriated under the legislation are wisely spent, and that the goals and purpose of the college are maintained."

Although this passage focuses on financial accountability, it also makes reference to wisdom, to goals and to purposes - value-charged matters on which views often differ. A job description for Board Members developed slightly earlier at Coteau Range Community College in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, describes the trustee's job as follows:

> "To fairly represent the adult members of the community college region in directing the affairs of the community college in

> such a way as to effectively move towards the achievement of the community college objectives within the established procedures and policies set out in the Community College Act, the Regulations and those developed by the board."

A subsequent (1985) revision of the Trustee Manual has the following section dealing with the societal responsibilities of trustees:

> "The concept of public trusteeship implies that there is trust between the public at large, and that those people who serve on boards and manage institutions on the public's behalf are appointed as responsible representatives of the public. It is their responsibility to direct the college towards meeting the needs of the public while monitoring the expenditure of public funds. Ultimately, trustees must make sure that the college is working in harmony with the community in which it exists. The program objectives of the college must be derived from the learning needs of the communities that it serves."

Apart from defining the slippery concept of 'learning needs', this would seem to create few difficulties - if only each trustee represented but a single identifiable group with but one commonly-held value system. In reality, that is rarely if ever the case. Within the service region of my own college in southwestern Saskatchewan, one finds Anglophones, Francophones, and others who speak in more exotic tongues. We have grain and dairy farmers, ranchers, urban workers and professionals; Hutterites, southeast Asian immigrants, an Indian Band, and many others. There are Jews, Catholics and a large variety of Protestants. Among the women are single working mothers, housewives, and nuns living in a convent. It is plainly wrong to assume that the values and aspirations of all of these groups coincide. Just which of the many different publics does each trustee represent? Or can one person represent them all?

Naturally, different trustees will view the scope of their trusteeship differently. Take the hypothetical example of a farmer named Bill from Gull Lake, Saskatchewan. Appointed to my college board, he may initially only wish to represent those interests which he and other farmers in southwestern Saskatchewan have in common. As Bill gains

experience, his horizons may widen - he may see himself as working for the good of all of Saskatchewan, all of Canada, all humanity. On any given issue, he may find that he gets one answer when he asks himself, "How will this benefit humanity?" He may get quite another answer when he asks, "How will this benefit rural and small-town Saskatchewan?" The answer may yet again be different if the question is, "How will this benefit us farmers in Gull Lake?" Then he reads about Global Learning, as it is described in some of the background material for a conference held by the Saskatchewan Association for Lifelong Learning at the University of Saskatchewan in April, 1988.

"Global learning," Bill is told, "requires a complementary linkage of issues horizontally, not only across disciplines and professions, but also across cultures, societies, ideologies, and vertically from local, regional, national and international levels." Further research takes him to Learning and Development: A Global Perspective (Toronto: O.I.S.E., 1986) where he reads that "... global learning by its very nature must involve all levels of society and all age-groups, if for no other reason than that it is the aggregate of individual decisions which conditions the success or failure of, say, population

policies or environmental preservation." And again: "The concept 'global' as used in conjunction with issues cannot be equated with the traditional concept 'international'; it has deeper and wider connotations ... The linkage between 'globality' and learning can then be seen as the learning required, at all levels, to cope with global issues."

Two major concepts relating to global learning are explained to him. "The first, participatory learning, is intended to create solidarity in space: the aim should be to foster participation in the learning and information sharing process, at all social levels, and at all ages. I should like ... to extend the concept of solidarity in space to encompass the need to learn how to accept, understand, and profit from cultural diversity ...

"The other feature, anticipatory learning, is seen as providing solidarity in time, through anticipation as the capacity to face new, often unprecedented situations and to create new alternatives where none existed before. However, solidarity in time also requires learning derived from the past, drawing the lessons from past successes and failures, which is in itself a daunting task."

Now this man, Bill, may come from a rural background, but he is not stupid. He ponders the implications of Global Learning; undaunted, he resolves to raise his horizons beyond Gull Lake, beyond Saskatchewan and Canada, beyond 1988, to embrace the whole world and all times. And this is surely reasonable - the problems that he observes close to home are those of adult illiteracy, of old skills being rendered obsolete by new technologies, of learning opportunities forever beyond the reach of too many people, and of insufficient resources being available to meet the educational needs of all. Unsurprisingly, these problems are not unique to Gull Lake; they are shared by all of Saskatchewan, by all of Canada - indeed, by the whole world. They recur throughout recorded history.

The impact of new technologies is a well-known case in point. Stone-age weapons were made obsolete by the development of metallurgy. Archers and arbalisters fell before musketeers. Riflemen were mowed down by machinegunners. The lifestyle of hunting and food-gathering societies was superseded by a farming way of life. Ships of wood propelled by the wind or oars were overtaken by ships of steel, powered successively by coal, by oil, and by atomic energy. While all these things

happened, the large mass of people - winners and losers alike - remained ignorant of exactly what was going on. "You don't know what is happening - do you, Mr. Jones?" The majority of men and women have always lived out their allotted days in ignorance, poverty, and a succession of defeats until death, the ultimate defeat, overtook them.

These problems, global in space and time, cry out for global solutions. Global learning, both as a vision and as a movement, offers to show Bill the way. In one sense of the term, global learning requires that the problems be addressed not in isolation from each other, but jointly; in a second sense, it asks that these same problems, which may be seen directly and immediately close to home, also be considered more remotely from a provincial, national, international - yes, a global - perspective.

3. The failure of global learning. With these conclusions firmly in mind, Bill goes to work. He is, I repeat, not stupid; he thinks deeply about what he has observed, and concludes that his college, for which he shares the responsibility of stewardship with six others, can do certain things to help. He believes that if these things are done, there will be an overall lessening of the immediate difficulties faced by learners in southwestern Saskatchewan, and that the world will be a better place, if only by a little. For terminological convenience but without sarcasm, I shall refer to his ideas as "Bill's Global Plan". The details are unimportant; we should suppose Bill's Plan to be eminently reasonable, so that you and I would have no difficulty in supporting it.

Mindful of the admonition that global learning "must involve all levels of society and all age-groups", Bill sets out to get feedback about his Global Plan from the people of his region. There now follows a painful episode, and I shall limit myself to merely sketching it in outline:

* The nuns hear him out politely, and ask whether the College could become a vehicle for pro-life

education. When Bill explains that on such controversial issues, both pro-life and pro-choice views would have to be given equal time, they lose interest.

* The Hutterites also hear him out politely, and explain that they have no intention of becoming involved in secular education provided by outsiders, beyond what the law requires for their children.

* The Chief and Council of the Indian Band refuse to discuss College involvement in any programs on the Reserve. Such educational activity is a responsibility of the federal government, they maintain, and they will not permit that responsibility to be shifted to an agency of the province.

* A member of the local Hell's Angels motorcycle gang, an unreconstructed relic of the turbulent Sixties and a latter-day

> disciple of the philosophy of Abbie Hoffman, graphically explains what he would do to the System, and suggests that either Bill do likewise, or it would be done for him, and perhaps to him.

Sadder but wiser, Bill considers the possibility that it is simply not possible for Global Learning, or any other single vision or movement, to relate meaningfully to every identifiable group in southwestern Saskatchewan, let alone the world. Yet he also remains convinced that his recent unhappy experiences do not require him to retreat to the narrow confines of his farm. "But how wide should I set my horizons?" he wonders. "And how should I relate to those who surely fall beyond?" These questions not only deserve an answer; they demand one. As for us, we would do well to note that Global Learning, either as a concept or as a movement, is not practical in any meaningful sense. It is bound to be wrecked when it runs into human diversity - just as Bill's Global Plan foundered in my little fable. Trustees are well-advised to abandon the pretense of taking a global view in favour of careful policy development at the local level.

4. On acting locally. Every year, hundreds of persons find themselves appointed or elected to boards or positions with the responsibility for making policy decisions relating to education. For many, perhaps for most, this is the first time that they have been placed in a policy-making role. As always, we can learn more from failures than from successes. In my experience, there are five common ways in which policy-makers can go wrong.

1. The first is that they simply fail to make themselves clear. Some time ago, I was employed by an Indian Band to supervise the operation of its three schools, which offered instruction up to Grade Twelve. Many years before this, formal education on that Reserve had been provided by the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches; more recently, the schools had been operated by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). Now, limited control of education had devolved to the Band. I was the first Superintendent hired by the Band, and I was responsible to Band authorities.

   However, the Band's control was not unrestricted. It was subject to certain terms and conditions of operation, which were

appended to a Contribution Arrangement - the written agreement between this Band and INAC, whereby INAC provided the required funds. As Superintendent, I seemed to be responsible for assuring that these terms and conditions were observed. In short, the terms and conditions functioned as my policy manual.

As it turned out, important parts of that manual were either hopelessly ambiguous or utterly unintelligible. They did convey a mood to me; so does a dog howling at the moon; in either case, efforts to state the sentiment in plain English are rewarded with failure and frustration. Two direct quotations will give us the flavor:

> "1. Shall ensure that the school program meets, or exceeds, the Saskatchewan Department of Education standards."

The general sense is clear, and it is commendable. Indian schools shall not be second-class operations; they shall meet provincial standards. What is not clear is specifically whose responsibility it is to assure

that such standards are met. Now you may suspect that some antecedent found in the original has been omitted from the quotation above, but this is not the case; there is no antecedent. Is the Saskatchewan Department of Education responsible for quality control? INAC? The Band? If it is the Band, shall it be the Band Council, the Education Authority, or the Superintendent? The program conditions maintain a discreet silence, setting the stage for confusion at best, and vicious recriminations at worst.

Relentlessly, the writer grinds on, until his language collapses in a heap of empty verbiage and scrambled syntax.

> "1. Supervise and control those parts of the educational program by establishing policies to effect the required management development within the framework of existing federal government policies and regulations."

Because this is a string of English-language words, it creates a momentary illusion of

meaning - even if, true to the established style, it lacks a subject. However, that particular illusion does not stand up to even cursory examination. Which parts of the education program are "those parts"? Is this a condition relating primarily (a) to supervision and control of the education program? (b) to management development? (c) to establishing policies for management development? (d) all of the above? (e) none of the above? The suspicion arises that somewhere in the policy-maker's mind there must have been a thought struggling to get out, but that thought has forever eluded every member of the Band staff, including people with master's degrees and many years of experience in teaching the English language.

It is instructive that even though this particular document was totally devoid of meaning, no one seemed to mind. The members of the Band who agreed to these terms and conditions did not know what they were agreeing to, nor did they care; their main concern was to gain control over their own schools. I do not know the degree to which senior officials in INAC were aware of what had

been written; one rather hopes that they were ignorant of the details. "Is the transfer of control orderly? Do we have policies in place? Good." Having received the assurances of lower-level officials that all was well with Band-controlled schools, they were content to probe no further, and turned their attention to other matters.

For my part, I was not unhappy. It seemed to me that since these regulations were incoherent, I could not possibly be held to them. I took the view that in the absence of policy, anything is permitted; an administrator must let common sense be the guide. I suspect that most administrators would agree with me, although a minority of us will not do anything at all unless it is explicitly permitted by policy. (I also recognize that most members of policy-making boards take a somewhat different view. It makes for an interesting relationship between boards and their administrators.)

2. The second failing that I have observed in policies is that they address something that is not a problem. The policy-makers assume that the problem is 'x', and devise procedures for

dealing with it. These procedures are reduced to writing and find their way into policy manuals. There is nothing wrong with this - as long as 'x' really is the problem. Sometimes it isn't.

Many years ago, I was employed by the Board of Education for the City of Toronto. A well-known phenomenon, then as now, is that residential mobility in the inner city is high, and children frequently experience a drop in marks when their families move residences. The problem as teachers and administrators see it is, "What can the school do to counteract the harmful effects of frequent moves?"

When something like this is pointed out to school trustees, the response is predictable. "How is administration handling this problem?" they ask. When the trustees realize that their administration has not yet found the perfect way to cope with the presumed bad effects of high mobility, they decide that the administrators need guidance. Since it is beyond the power of school trustees to stop families from moving, the best they can do is to lay down procedures for the school staff to

assure that children will suffer as little as possible when their family moves.

All this is very reasonable, very humane - and quite mistaken. Closer study showed that moving does not harm children, even when that move means a change of schools. The key variable was not whether a family was residentially mobile or stable. The key variable turned out to be whether the move occurred for happy or unhappy reasons. The area of Toronto which I studied was one that was populated by derelicts, prostitutes, recent immigrants, and families on the skids. A common pattern was that the families on the skids moved frequently. They were running from bill collectors, they were evicted, or the adults had a falling out and selected new mates. These families had ended up in the worst part of town. Although they shared the neighborhood with recent immigrants, the similarity between the two groups ended there. The new Canadians had not ended up in the worst part of town; they were starting out there. When they moved, it was because the main wage earner had found a better job, or because they moved into better housing.

Significantly, while the school marks of children from mobile old Canadian families typically declined with each move, the marks of children from mobile immigrant families remained unchanged or even improved. Overall, there were more old Canadian families than new Canadians among the mobile segment of this population; hence, the apparent association of high mobility with declining marks. However, the experience of the recent immigrants suggested that it was not the moving that did the damage to the children - it was the combination of distressing circumstances that also led to so many of the moves.

The lesson for the policy-makers is to beware of untested assumptions. Policies designed to make it easier for children to transfer from one school to another will do no harm and perhaps some good, but they do nothing to correct a bad situation in the home. What, if anything, the school can or should do to help children cope with a poisoned home life is a different and much larger question, which persists in spite of policies on school transfers.

3. A third common problem is that new policies or revisions of existing policies are needed, but no one ever seems to get around to doing the required work. Not only do most administrators prefer being permitted to rely on their own good judgment rather than being forced to follow someone else's policy manual; they also are genuinely preoccupied with the thousand and one tasks of day-to-day management. Because of clear and pressing needs, frequent exceptions are made to written policies, until the exception becomes the rule and the rule, as written, is forgotten. Decisions are made in the absence of policies, because we cannot allow our institutions to be paralyzed. The next time a similar case arises, more decisions are made, which may or may not follow precedent. Sooner or later, inconsistencies arise and take their toll.

For reasons which should be so obvious that they need not be argued at length, most administrators cannot be relied upon to inform the policy-makers voluntarily of every instance where new or revised policies are needed. Left to themselves, they will improvise and rely on common sense. A policy,

after all, is only a guideline, to be followed or ignored as circumstances and judgment dictate.

At Cypress Hills Regional College, we are currently considering the following provision:

> "The Principal, in consultation with the Board Chairperson, may authorize temporary deviations from Board Policies. All such deviations must be reported to the Board at the earliest opportunity."

The intent is to allow for administrative flexibility while at the same time calling the Board's attention to persistent or repeated deviations from policy. Only if the Board is aware of these deviations can it intelligently decide between taking steps to assure compliance, or revising a policy that has proven itself to be unworkable in practice (something which is surprisingly common). A quick review of our own policy manual revealed a number of items to us which are frequently breached in practice, sometimes by administrators, sometimes by the Board itself. For instance, Policy #83-10-08/S83-02-04 reads, in part:

> "1. The minutes of Board Meetings shall be numbered and contain a summary of verbal discussion. Brief captions shall be in the margin."

Our Board's actual practice is to publish minutes which consist of the wording of motions, their disposition, and brief identifying captions. No summary of verbal discussions ever appears in the minutes. Such summaries are recorded in the form of notes to the minutes, but these are a separate document. The distinction between the minutes and the notes is of practical importance; while the former is a public document, the latter need not be.

Again, our policy regarding minimum enrolment in university classes brokered by us (#85-05-06) reads as follows:

> "Minimum enrolment for courses offered through the University of Saskatchewan and Regina shall be a minimum of 14 full fee-paying students."

I am embarrassed to report that this is a policy which we break all the time. Many of our university classes have enrolments of twelve, ten or even fewer students. However, our co-ordinator of university courses does assure that an average enrolment of fifteen is maintained. As long as we do not fall below that average, we will not lose unconscionable sums of money on university classes - a turn of events which the policy as written was intended to prevent. If that intent is met, no one minds that the strict letter of the policy is violated.

However, it is arguably true that when certain policies are repeatedly violated or circumvented, the entire policy manual is called into question - and with it, the control exercised by the board over the college. It remains to be seen what effect the proposed mechanism for bringing such deviations to the board's attention will have.

4. A fourth failing of policy manuals is that they sometimes contain items that are no doubt necessary, but that are simply not policy. Policies are expected to provide guidance to

staff; what guidance can anyone take from a supposed "policy" which states (73-05-17):

> "That the Board approve the official seal of the College, showing the name 'CYPRESS HILLS COMMUNITY COLLEGE, Incorporated May 1, 1973'."

Now the matter would be different if this policy regulated the custody and use of the seal. That it fails to do, and I have never been clear on precisely when our seal may be used, or who has the authority to order that it be affixed to documents. In fact, with our change in name to Cypress Hills Regional College, administrators on their own initiative ordered a new seal, showing the new name. Trustees know that this was done, and someday 73-05-17 may either be amended or deleted. Until then, it will take up its page in my policy manual, a silent memorial to a bygone era, and absolutely useless.

5. The fifth and final failing that I have observed is that policy-makers frequently do not follow up to assure that their policies are being implemented. A classic example came to my attention over a decade ago, when I was doing a

study of student drop-outs at an Ontario community college. As a part of this work, I conducted a review of institutional policies regarding student attendance, and I came across a memorandum, then about a year old, from the Director of Student Affairs. It read, in part:

> "It has been the policy previously for instructors to contact a counsellor when a student has been absent for over a week, so that the reasons for his or her poor attendance may be ascertained and possible assistance given. Please continue to advise the counselling staff in this manner."

This was in contrast to a widely-held perception among the faculty that the senior administration viewed college students as mature adults, to be given responsibility for regulating their own attendance. Only two instructors of twenty whom I interviewed were even aware of a policy of referring non-attending students to counsellors. Program heads, perhaps jealously protecting their own turf, did not collaborate enthusiastically. Counsellors, in turn, reported that fewer than ten percent of the students whom they saw had been referred to them by

instructors. The memorandum from the Director of Student Affairs was reasonably clear; a year later, it had been all but forgotten. Such is the fate of many written policies if they are not monitored and followed up with appropriate encouragement by their makers.

* * *

A personal note: I began working for the Toronto Board of Education in 1966. During the years that followed, like most men and women in my profession, I spent a lot more time acting locally than thinking globally. You have heard some of the difficulties that I have encountered. It remains for us to examine how the resolution of these difficulties relates to global learning.

5. Some modest conclusions. So far, many questions have arisen, but no firm answers have been proposed. It may be helpful to re-state the most important issues.

* Is it possible for policy-makers to gain a global perspective - to involve all segments of society, all age groups, and so on?

* If so, how can the obviously conflicting values of the different groups be reconciled? If not, then how narrow or broad a view should policy-makers take? How much should the global perspective be compromised?

* How can the many practical problems that arise in the policy area be solved or, better yet, prevented? Does global learning have all the answers? Does it have any answers?

Whether it is possible for policy-makers or anyone else to take a global perspective depends largely on what one means by 'global'. Defined loosely but broadly as "all-inclusive", the notion of a global

perspective runs into serious difficulties. To put it simply, a global perspective either places a policy-maker within the real world, or outside of it. If outside, then his point of view could be said to be objective by virtue of its elevated position; but then, just because he is outside, he will not influence the real world. The moment that one steps inside and begins to exert an influence, one loses the objectivity that comes with a global perspective, and one becomes just another force contending with the many other forces acting in the world. If global learning is understood in this restricted sense, then it becomes nothing more than another passing fad in the history of educational thinking, a slogan that will take its place alongside of such notions as "teaching the whole child", "progressive education", or "educating for life".

Another way of illustrating the difficulties created by the concept of globality is by insisting on maintaining the distinction between subject and object. In the common-sense way of looking at things, policy-makers are subjects - that is to say, they are individuals. The objects of their activity are the people and organizations they regulate.

If a global perspective is assumed, then all such distinctions threaten to disappear in the "complementary linkage" of all levels of society, all cultures, all disciplines. In some sense, the policy-makers and those whom they would then regulate become one. Some may find this desirable. I prefer to keep a certain distance between those who regulate and the object of their regulations; to join them creates an intolerable conflict of interests. More technical illustrations of the difficulties that arise from all-inclusive thinking abound. In philosophy, the Absolute of G.W.F. Hegel's Phänomenologie des Geistes is of historical interest only; philosophically speaking, it fell in upon itself; few modern philosophers will defend it, though many would point to Hegel's legacy among Marxists and existentialists. Bertrand Russell discovered, to his great displeasure while he was writing his Principles of Mathematics, that the notion of a set that includes itself as a member generates a paradox. Finally, a widely-known but little-understood proof by Kurt Gödel ("Über formal unentscheidbare Sätze der Principia Mathematica und verwandter Systeme") demonstrates that it is impossible to construct a proof of the consistency of arithmetic or similar systems without going outside to another system whose consistency can only be assumed. It seems to

be a built-in feature of all-inclusive theories that they just don't work. If, however, one loosely defines 'global' as meaning "broad", then it may be conceded that very often, a broad point of view is more productive than a narrow one. Against this it must be said, first, that such is by no means always the case - witness the many legal cases which judges prefer to decide on narrow grounds - and second, that a definition thus restricted is certainly not what the proponents of global learning seem to have in mind.

Think again about the extravagant claims made on behalf of global learning. We are assured that it "... must involve all levels of society and all age-groups ..." What disasters would befall us if all levels are not involved? And what about my Hutterite neighbors, who ask nothing more than to be left alone? Will the roof fall in unless we drag them, kicking and screaming, to conferences like this one? We were solemnly told that we should "foster participation in the learning and information sharing process, at all social levels ...", that we should learn "to accept, understand, and profit from cultural diversity ..." Does this mean that I should invite my neighbor from Hell's Angels to participate in an information-sharing event? Should I encourage my

Board to give serious thought to the demands of what used to be called the counter-culture? Should the question of whether or not our college participate in the destruction of the system be referred to our Board's policy committee?

Enough of this. It simply is not necessary to debate every question, and not all segments of society need to be involved in formal learning. It is perfectly all right to decline an invitation to engage in a dialogue which would serve us no useful purpose. Obviously, it would be foolish and arrogant to refuse to discuss topics of major importance, but I do reserve the right to decide for myself what constitutes "major importance", and what constitutes a frivolous or malicious attempt to disrupt my college in particular, and the educational process in general. And that is the last time, at least in this paper, that I shall address the matters raised by the likes of Abbie Hoffman. In answer to a related question which is legitimate - how broad or narrow one's perspective should be - I can say only that this depends on the circumstances of the moment and the purposes one has in mind. Recognizing that purposes and values differ, I would now like to call attention to certain techniques and principles which may be helpful in dealing with contentious issues. They can

be particularly useful when applied to the process of making policies.

a) Be sure of the facts. Board members often receive a suggestion, from administrators or others, that they adopt a certain policy. At that point, it is wise to ask what the circumstances are which make the proposed policy desirable. For instance, it may be urged that the governing board allocate a certain percentage of its budget to professional development. In that connection, it would be useful for the board members to know, first, how much their institution has been spending on professional development, who have been the main users of professional development funds, how much similar institutions are spending in that area, and how they are allocating these funds. All of this is quite apart from such value-laden questions as to how and why professional development benefits the institution, how and why it benefits the recipient, how and why it benefits the student, and how valuable professional development is in comparison to other activities. At this stage, it is best to take the approach of television's Sergeant Jack Friday: "Just the facts, ma'm."

b) Be absolutely clear about your assumptions. In the real world, it is not possible to prove everything; assumptions are a part of life for everyone. I step into a busy street to cross with a green light; I assume that the vehicles coming my way will stop; I am justified in making that assumption because both the law and common driving practice require them to do so. This does not mean that they always will; pedestrians do get run down by drunk or careless drivers even when the traffic light is with them. Nonetheless, it is not unreasonable to assume that when a driver comes to a red light, (s)he will bring the vehicle to a complete stop.

Tuition refund policies provide an example that relates directly to education. If we assume that most people ask for tuition refunds because of unavoidable and unforeseeable changes in their circumstances, we will make our tuition refund policy relatively lenient. If we believe that most people ask for refunds because of their own fickleness or poor planning, then our policy is likely to be stricter. Of course, there will always be a few people who are poor planners,

and a few who are true victims of circumstances. We may never find out which assumption about human nature is more nearly correct, but we should at least be clear in our own minds as to what assumptions we are making - and we would stand to benefit immensely if we become skilled at finding out the assumptions of others. (We are also likely to benefit from discussing our own assumptions with people who think otherwise.)

c) Be as clear as possible about the meanings of your terms. Although this sounds simple, it may well be the most difficult principle to follow. We think that we understand ordinary English, and we often forget that it is possible to attach many different meanings to one word.

For instance, one concept that is bandied about rather loosely is the notion of learning needs. Trustees, as we saw, are told that it is their responsibility to direct the college toward meeting the learning needs of the public. Now a learning need can be:

- a prerequisite for program admission; applicants need credit for Biology 20 for entry into a nursing program.

- a requirement for program completion; students need six credits in English to receive a B.A.

- a more general deficiency in certain skills; immigrants need to learn English, and I need accounting skills if my business is to survive.

- an expression of social policy; more people need to acquire entrepreneurial skills if Canada is to survive in the twenty-first century.

- an expression of a motive; Dick and Jane are taking aerobics because of a felt need to improve their physical fitness.

- an expression of a fad; last year, the demand was for aerobics, but now that computer prices have come down, everyone needs to know about computer programming.

- a personal whim; I am taking a philosophy course because I decided I needed to find out about the meaning of life.

Generally speaking, the consequences of unmet educational needs are less drastic than those of unmet physical needs. One can survive in Canada without having taken a philosophy course and even without speaking either official language, but no one can survive if the physical needs for food and water are unmet. Because the notion of a learning need is appallingly vague, it is possible to palm off mere whims or personally preferred policy directions as needs which are as pressing as our physical needs. All that is required to do so is some conceptual legerdemain; all that is needed to prevent it is clear thinking and conceptual analysis.

In one of the documents I received from the organizers of the S.A.L.L. conference, I was informed that "Contemporary learning needs indicate that we need to learn ... how to accept planetary obligations to present as well as to future generations." What, exactly, does this

mean? What is a planetary obligation to a generation, and how does it differ from one obligation to a single individual? What did I do to incur that obligation, or was it simply thrust upon me? In what sense do I need to learn to accept this obligation? What will happen if I am intellectually incapable of such high-level learning? What will happen if I prefer to believe that I have a higher obligation to God? Do I have such an obligation even though I am irreversibly sterile, and will never leave descendents of my own? I can accept this claim as a personal expression of a policy preferred by one or more individuals, but I question whether that preference can be elevated to a categorically required need with universal applicability.

People who make policies should not be taken in by wild claims that everyone must accept certain points of view, especially when these points of view hinge on vague terms capable of many interpretations. In the present instance, I am certainly not prepared to agree that I need to recognize any obligation to future generations unless I know exactly what those obligations are claimed to be, and in what sense they extend to whole generations.

d) Be relevant to your institution. There are many worthwhile things to be done, without a doubt. Not all of them are relevant to my college.

"We must learn", I am told in a conference hand-out, "how to manage global, complex systems." There probably is a sense and a setting in which this is true. But neither my college nor its graduates have their hands on the levers that control the world economy, and I do not feel that I should devote the resources of my institution to teaching global systems management. I am satisfied if out students keep their own house in order on a very personal level.

Sometimes it happens that someone appointed to a college trusteeship has certain burning personal concerns. If these relate to the college, fair enough; if they do not, then they should not intrude into the planning and policy-making process of the institution.

e) Remember that even the finest policies need to be monitored in their implementation. There are many who would hold that the best policy

manual that people can follow is the set of ten commandments given by God to Moses. The history of humanity since then should convince everyone that having these policies in place has not been good enough. Well-drafted policies will have results only if they are supplemented by sound administrative practices, including careful monitoring of their implementation and conscientious follow-up.

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I can say little against taking a broad view on policy issues. However, I have not observed that policy-makers who most nearly approach a global perspective are the ones who succeed most frequently. Instead, I have observed that success in policy-making comes to people who:

- have their facts straight,
- know what they (and others) are assuming,
- make the meaning of their words clear,
- are relevant to their institution,

- monitor policy implementation and otherwise follow good management principles, and
- have some idea of where they want to go before sitting down to write policies telling others how to get there. This is goal-setting, an activity distinct from policy-making and the subject of another paper.

These things will not turn policy-makers into global thinkers or learners, but they will increase their chances of scoring some policy successes.

Policies are like dreams. They can be pleasant or they can be nightmares. They may reflect what happens in real life, they may resemble it in some obscure symbolic sense, or they may be something totally divorced from reality. I think that if you are going to dream, it is better for your dreams to be pleasant than to be nightmares. Or, in the words of Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, if you are going to build a structure in the air, it might as well be a castle as a house of cards.

Saskatchewan Association for Lifelong Learning

GLOBAL LEARNING

What is global learning?

Global learning is both a vision and a movement initiated by a group of constructive thinkers representing many different cultures and disciplines in all phases of development who are intent on reconceptualizing learning for the sake of development, development of individuals, of communities of humankind.

Based on the assumptions that:

1) learning is the critical factor in the process of development;
2) every culture produces unique and valuable knowledge;
3) the development of humankind is dependent on the interpenetration of the unique knowledge of various cultures;

global learning requires a complementary linkage of issues horizontally, not only across disciplines and professions, but also across cultures, societies, ideologies, and vertically from local, regional, national and international levels. Based on traditional as well as contemporary thought, it attempts to address the learning needs of the 20th century, upon which better and more humane concepts of individual and society may be reconstructed for human and planetary survival. Inherent in the concept is to learn how to generate, evaluate, select and share vast amounts of new, timely and relevant knowledge at all social levels.

Why did the concept come about?

There are a number of reasons why the concept emerged that are best expressed in two communities:

1) Within the international community concerned with world problems of development, there was a growing conviction that the solution to these problems was linked to a redefinition of learning that would address the corresponding learning needs of the 20th century. First introduced by the United Nations University (UNU), global learning grew out of the need to address solutions to urgent and growing widespread problems precipitated by competition and rapid technological changes, particularly in the field of communications. Advances in communication technologies (television and the computer) have had a significant impact on all cultures by transforming the most remote corners in the world into the reality of a "global village", thereby creating new stresses and expectations because of the immediacy of the communication network. Based on this, as well as

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the belief that conventional systems can no longer absorb knowledge generated, and desseminate it in the usual educational lifespan, this has precipitated a crisis "in" and "of" education, the "crisis in education" being the inability of the education system to respond to all the new demands, the "crisis of education" related to the information explosion in relation of what to learn. Thus, learning is perceived to be occurring in a vitally new context and must continue to occur on a broadly conceived basis if we are to adapt/cope with change.

2) In response to increasingly complex problems generated by change, people from many different disciplines within the social, political and economic spheres, began to consider solutions to these world problems from an alternative perspective. By redefining old problems from a learning perspective, new alternatives could be proposed. In distinguishing learning from education, learning appeared to be a more fundamental discipline than education, and that it ought to be established as an independent field of study. Within the dominant educational perspective, it became useful to look at learning as a perspective from which to examine society itself.

Thus, global learning can be seen to referring both to "learning about global issues and processes, and learning processes globally perceived".

Where and when did the concept of global learning originate?

First introduced by the United Nations University, global learning is not a new concept, and has been evolving through ongoing discussions on education and lifelong learning in the international community since the 1970's. Preceeded by the UNESCO Conference which produced the Faure Report, Learning To Be (1973), and followed by Club of Rome Report (1980), which emphasized innovative and integrated learning, the ongoing dialogue on education and lifelong learning was again formalized in Toronto at an international symposium on Global Learning in May, 1985.

Who attended the first symposium on global learning and what was the outcome?

Under the auspices of the UNU, CIDA and OISE, 42 participants from 21 countries, representing all of the world's major cultures and almost all of the world's intellectual disciplines and practices directly associated with learning, presented their views on the relationship of Learning and Development. Allan Thomas (OISE) and Edward Ploman (UNU), symposium conveners, produced a symposium report entitled Learning and Development: A Global Perspective (1986) Toronto: OISE Press. This publication contains fourteen of the papers presented at the symposium and represents the many and varied contributions being made to understand learning.

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Why would anyone be interested in global learning?

What makes the global learning so exciting as a concept is that it has been translated into a vision and a movement that promotes learning for the sake of development... development of the individual, of institutions, of humankind. Based on the premise that learning is linked to development,it integrates the new with the old, and promotes respect amongst all cultures. Its emphasis is not only on the individual's capacity to learn, but also on the learning capacity for society as a means of helping to prepare us to live in the future. Nettleford, a symposium contributor from the University of the West Indies, sees the task of educators as "a preparation of persons through a learning process that will guarantee intellectual plasticity, flexibility, and adaptibility which are the cause, occasion, and result of creative thinking and action." (p. 203).

What contemporary learning needs have been identified ?

Contemporary learning needs indicate that we must learn the following things:

1) how to manage global, complex systems while respecting the autonomy of the processes and elements within these systems
2) how to develop the ability of adjusting to and coping with new technologies, new demographic patterns, new modes of production, new stages of political consciousness, and new images of the world and ourselves
3) how to accept planetary obligations to present, as well as to, future generations
4) how to understand and manage systems that are, in a global perspective marked by a profound change, and thus, by uncertainty and unpredictability
5) how to cope with transition and the uncertainty, and pain of change
6) how to generate, evaluate, select and share vast amounts of new, timely and relevant information at all social levels from the villager to the political decision-maker

What will challenges do we face in promoting global learning?

Because Global Learning is a dynamic concept that will continue to evolve, the test, as Allan Thomas says, " will be the extent to which the attempt succeeds... It will be a while as to whether the follow-up, if it occurs, will really contribute to the concepts of global development." For each of us, it will not be the extent to which we can understand or promote global learning, but the extent to which we can contribute to global development.

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